



RNI
99

For more information on RNI write to: RNI, 73b Connaught Avenue, Frinton-on-

THE RADIO NORTHSEA INTERNATIONAL PICTURE SOUVENIR



RNI
99

Published by Paul Graham

THE RNI PROJECT 1999 INTRODUCTION



FOLLOWING the success of the Radio London revival in August 1997, I had often thought of setting up another offshore revival project; I attempted to do this in 1998, but things didn't really fall into place then.

So the idea for RNI really began to take shape in early 1999; at this time it was planned to operate the station from the end of Clacton Pier. I set about putting all the various things into place, and whilst doing this it was brought to my attention that the RNLI was celebrating its 175th Anniversary and I thought it was very good idea to combine the two somehow.

Following a meeting with the Clacton RNLI branch the idea of a ship seemed a good one; I knew of several people that I could approach who either had a vessel, or could acquire one.

During early March I contacted 'Sea Containers' who had a redundant light ship in Harwich Harbour; I had also contacted them two years previously for the Radio London project, but at that time they were unable to help. When I spoke to the local manager, Colin Crawford, and told him of my intentions and the link with the RNLI he agreed to meet me to discuss the finer points of the project, as he himself was an active member of that fine organisation.

Towards the end of March Colin and I visited the light vessel, which was in a sorry state. A lot of work was needed to put the vessel into good order, but Colin was quite happy for us to do just that, so I put together a team of volunteers and with the help of the environmental agency's task force, set about the long job in hand.

The story of the RNI 1999 project is told in this book as a series of photographs.

Paul Graham, Project Manager.
Layout design and editing, Phil Mitchell

Photographs were taken by the following people: Paul Graham, Colin Lamb, Clive Boutell, Dave West, Baudoin Dom, Peter Messingfield, Chris and Mary Payne, John S. Platt and Phil Mitchell

Engineering & Broadcast Equipment

ALTHOUGH the Mebo III is equipped with four generators located in the engine room, two 5.5 Kw and two 10 Kw. These were 110 volt DC units, which were unsuitable for our studio or transmission equipment.

For this reason it was necessary to have two generators on deck to provide 240 volts AC power. A further complication, brought about by the Health and Safety Executive banning the use of butane or propane gas on the ship, meant food for the broadcasting staff and crew had to be prepared by electrical cooking. This meant a larger generator was required to power the cooker. A generator of 15KVA was selected, which was kindly loaned by Healey Tool Hire, and craned aboard the Mebo III while still alongside Trinity Pier at Harwich. Because of the large fuel consumption of this big generator it was only used for a couple of hours a day, at mealtimes, and for standby use at other times. The main generator used throughout the broadcast was Paul Maclaren's 4 kW Petter AC1 unit. This generator only consumed one gallon of fuel every 4 hours, but had adequate capacity to not only run the 100 watt transmitter and the studio, but also the day to day requirements of the galley; fridge, toaster, kettle and microwave. This generator ran practically trouble free for between 20 and 24 hours per day. Being air-cooled it was a little noisy and could often be heard on the mike during broadcasts adding more piratical feel.

The main transmitter is a 100-watt home built unit, using all bipolar transistors and employing series modulation. Originally built as a standby unit for a larger transmitter, it had never been intended for 24 hour a day operation, but apart from two lightning strikes, performed without problem. Initially during the broadcasts a faulty crystal allowed the transmitter to be 630 Hz off channel, this was soon reduced to 300 Hz and eventually, with modification of the oscillator circuitry, dead on 1575 kHz.

The aerial constructed on the ex Lightship is an inverted L, of three parallel wires spaced by 1/2 metre bars strung between the ships forward mast and a wind-up tower welded to the stern helicopter deck. This arrangement proved resonant on 1575 kHz, with no series inductance required to match it. It also just cleared the ships centre mast with the lightening conductor. The three-wire design of the aerial system allowed wide bandwidth audio from the optimod A.M. processor to be enjoyed by RNI's listeners.

The standby transmitter, kindly loaned by Mr. Trevor Smith, was a traditional plate modulated 50-watt valve design with a pi-tank output stage. This performed faultlessly when the main transmitter was struck by lightning, albeit at lower power it was amazingly dead on channel (a different crystal, but from the same manufacturer)!

Throughout the 28 day RSL all output was monitored in the transmitter room by oscilloscope and spectrum analyser to ensure no interference could be caused to other broadcasters.

March '99



The LV 18 at the Old Railway Pier, Harwich

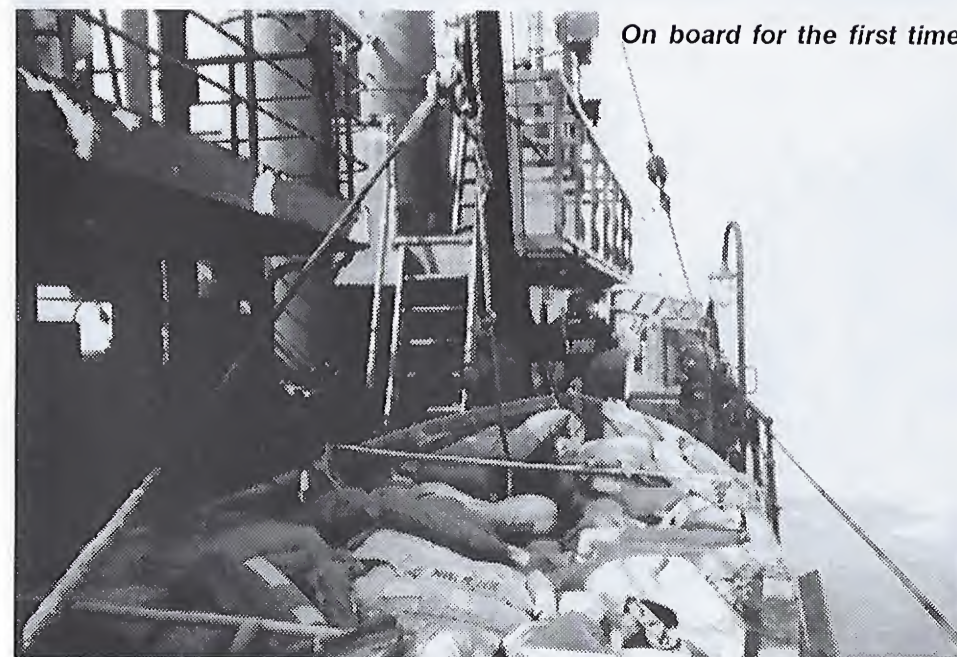
LV 18



March '99



The LV 18 alongside the Old Railway Pier – in a sorry state



On board for the first time

March - May '99

The moss infested heli-deck



Airing mattresses from the crew's cabins



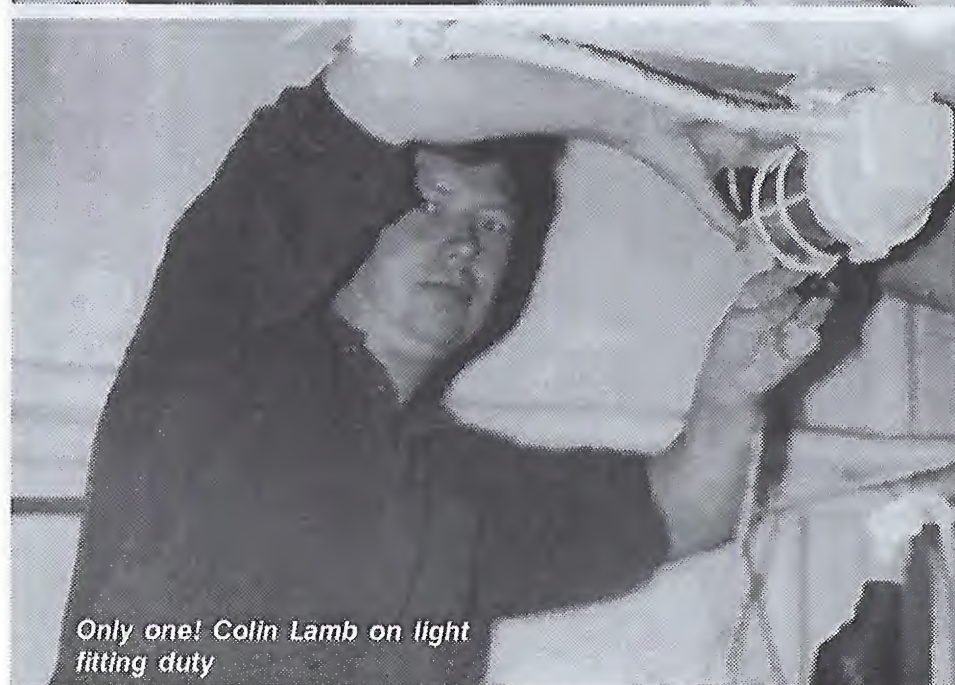
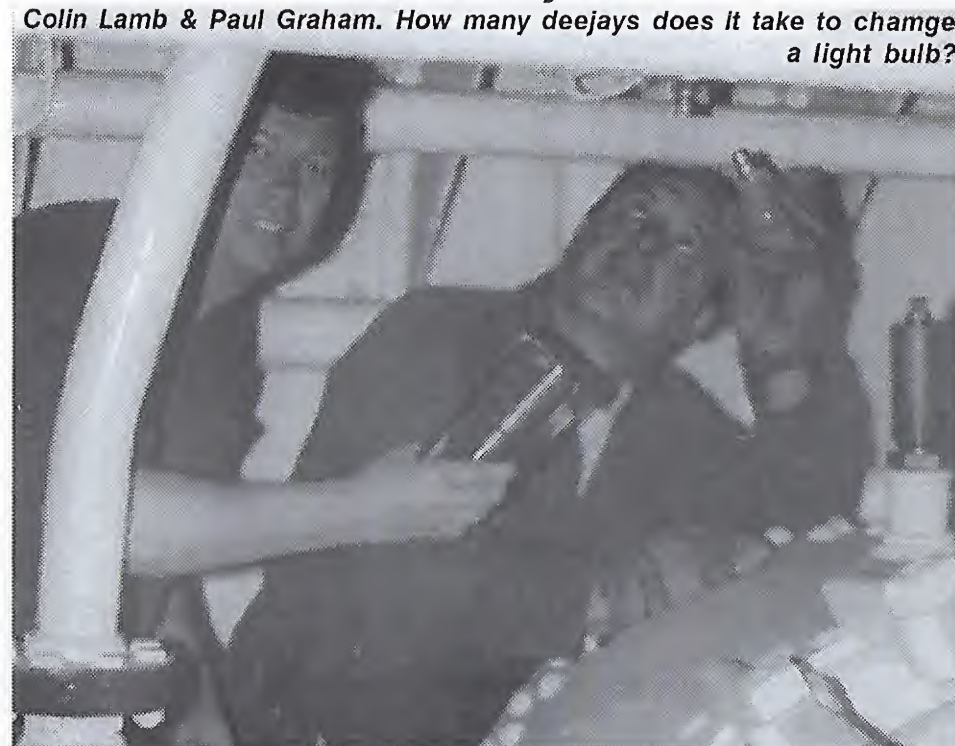
Paul Graham on dust duty



Clive Boutell gets stuck in!

March - May '99

Colin Lamb & Paul Graham. How many deejays does it take to change a light bulb?



Only one! Colin Lamb on light fitting duty

Mid May '99



Work underway on board the LV 18

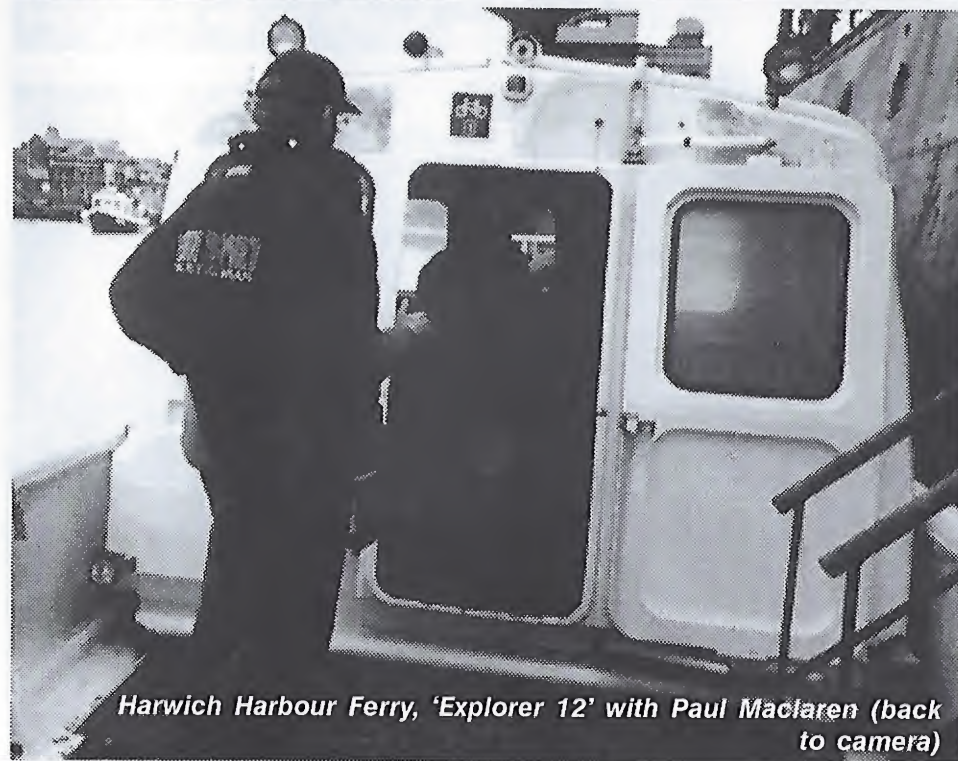


Task Force 'Rust Busters'

Mid May '99



Crew members with 'Skipper'
Mick Catchpole (centre)



Harwich Harbour Ferry, 'Explorer 12' with Paul Maclaren (back to camera)

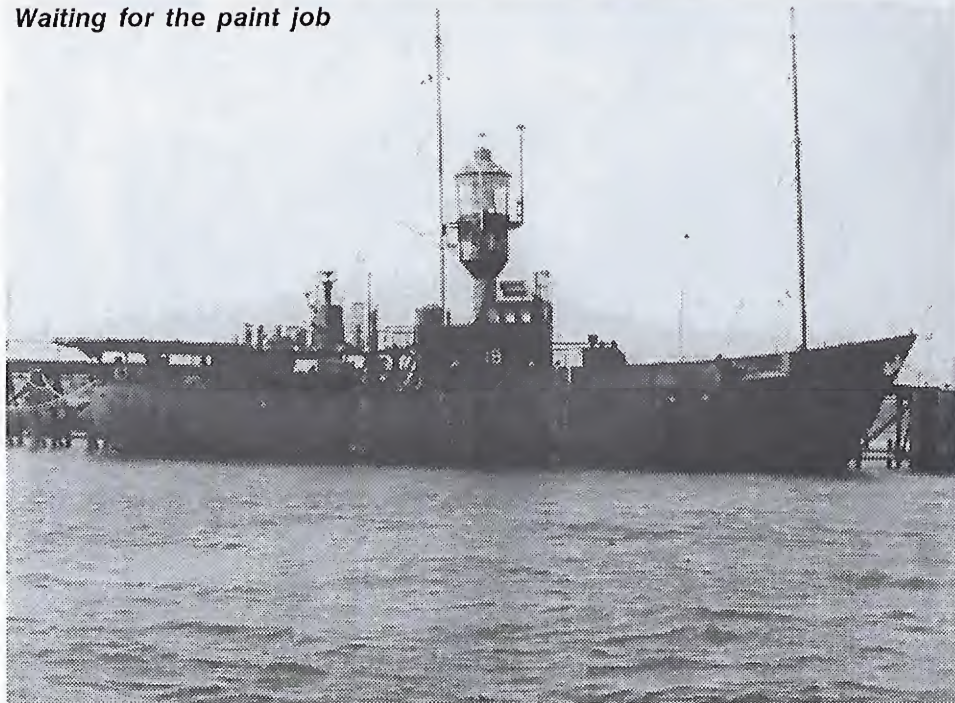
Mid to Late May '99



LV 18 – looking rather rusty

Late May '99

Waiting for the paint job



Late May '99



Trinity House Launch, 'The Vectis' being loaded with old life-jackets



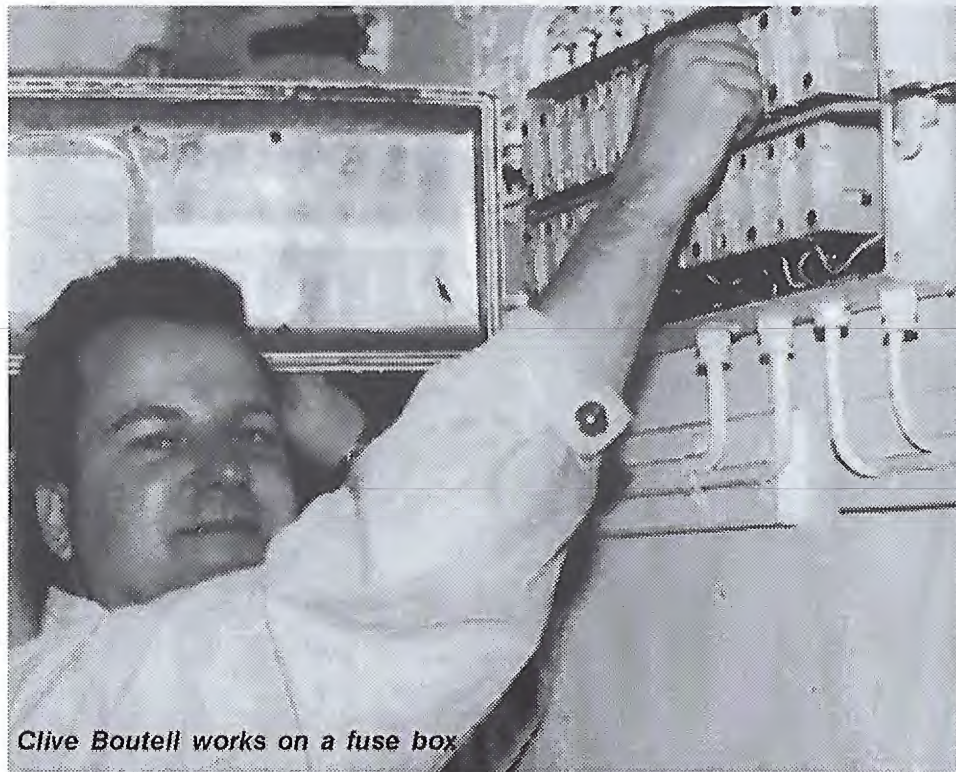
Crew members disposing of old Life-jackets



Paul Graham knows his place

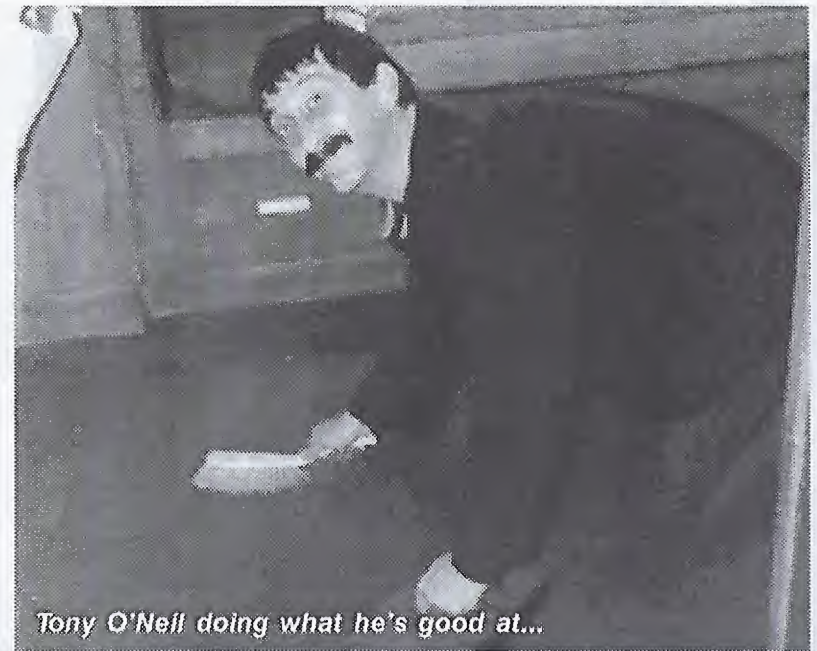
Late May - June '99

Rusting hell-pad with rotting safety net - later removed



Clive Boutell works on a fuse box

Late May - June '99



Tony O'Neill doing what he's good at...



Clive Boutell cleaning deck lights

*Long climb to the
Lantern Tower*



Early June '99



Graham Vine & Colin Lamb working on a forward hatch cover



Graham Vine working on another hatch cover



Graham Vine removing asbestos from a pyrotechnics box

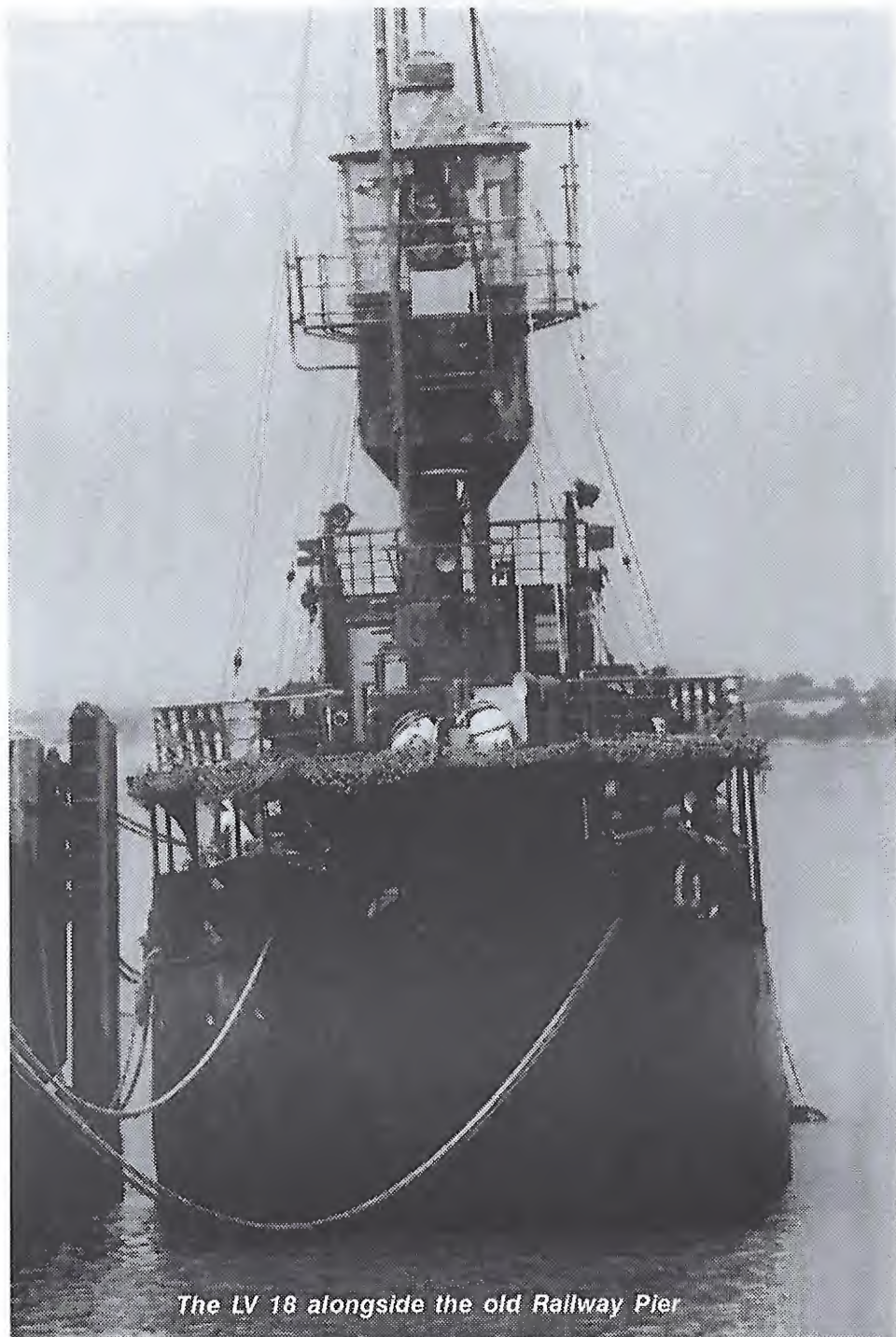
Early June '99



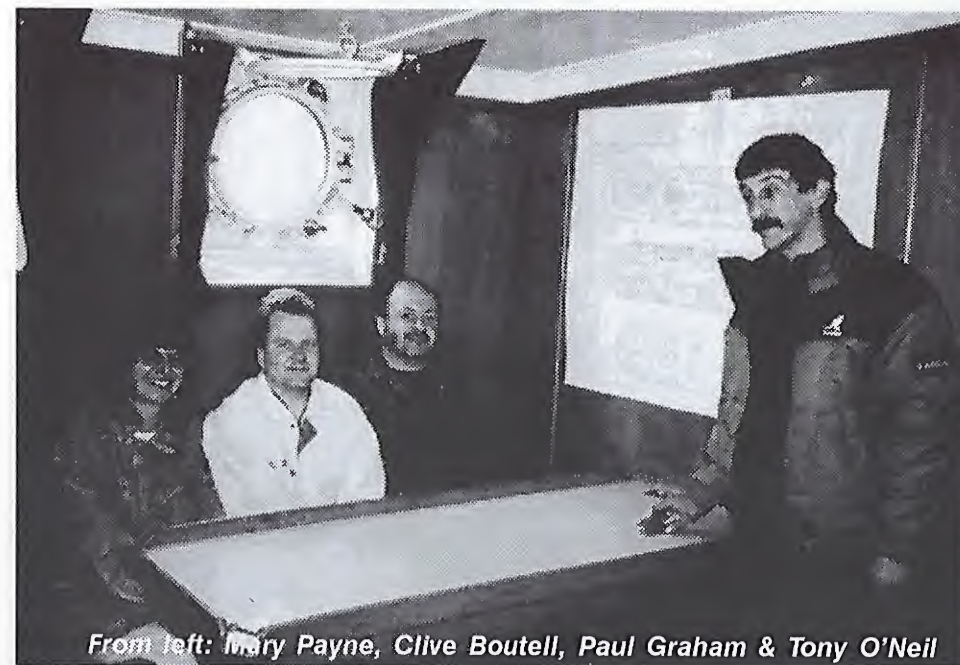
Graham Vine frees up a hatch cover



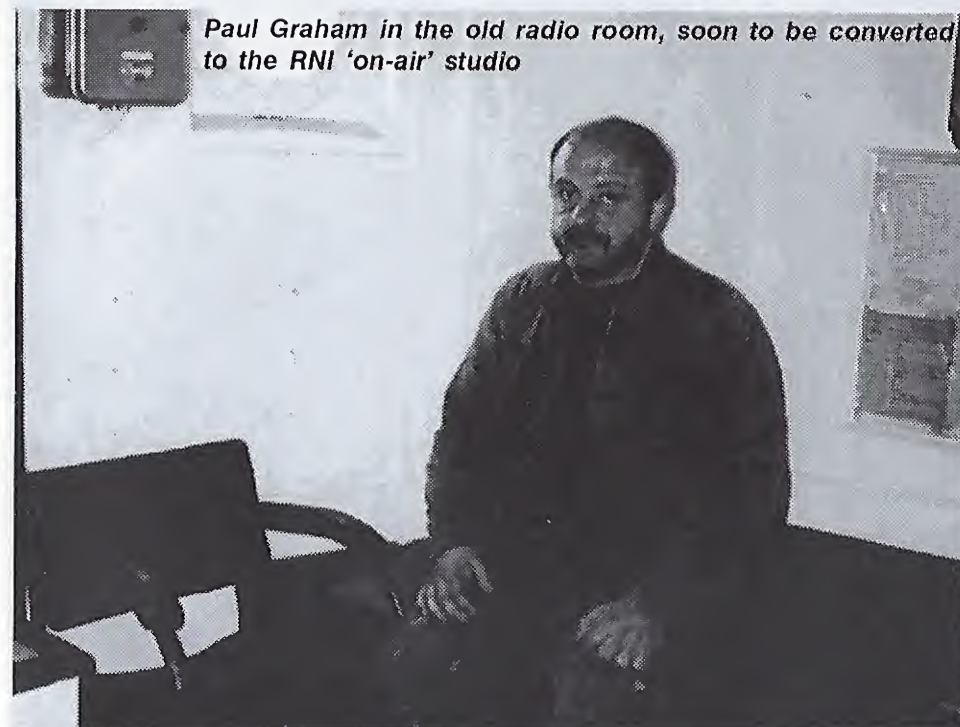
Colin Lamb & Paul Graham - more-painting!



The LV 18 alongside the old Railway Pier

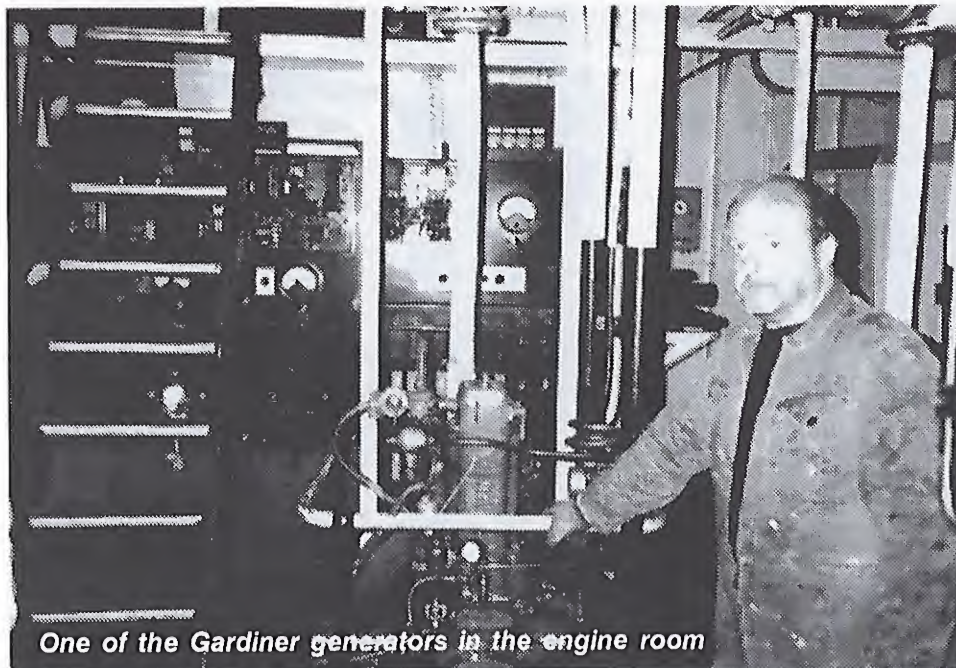


From left: Mary Payne, Clive Boutell, Paul Graham & Tony O'Neil



Paul Graham in the old radio room, soon to be converted to the RNI 'on-air' studio

Mid to Late June '99

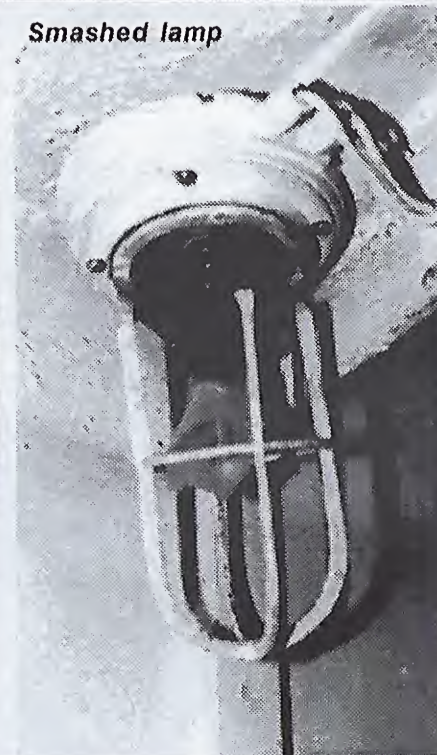


One of the Gardiner generators in the engine room



The master's cabin after the vandals attack

Smashed lamp



Late June '99



The galley, after the vandals had paid us a visit

Late June '99

Paul Graham painting the hull



Late June - Mid July '99

Paul Graham - still painting!



Paul Graham, John Platt and Colin Lamb - still more painting!

Mid July '99



*Task force foreman, Gary and Clive Boutell
discuss rebuilding the fresh water pump*

Mid July '99



Derek gets stuck in!

Mid July '99



Painting a deck vent



Paul Maclaren cooks the first hot meal on-board



The boys are still painting!!

Mid July '99

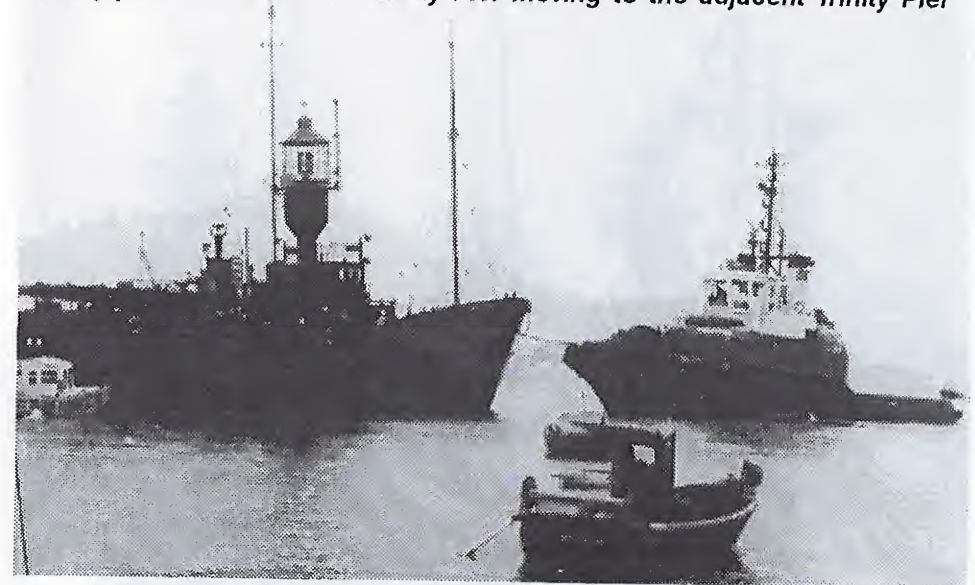


The LV 18 – awaiting her final paint job



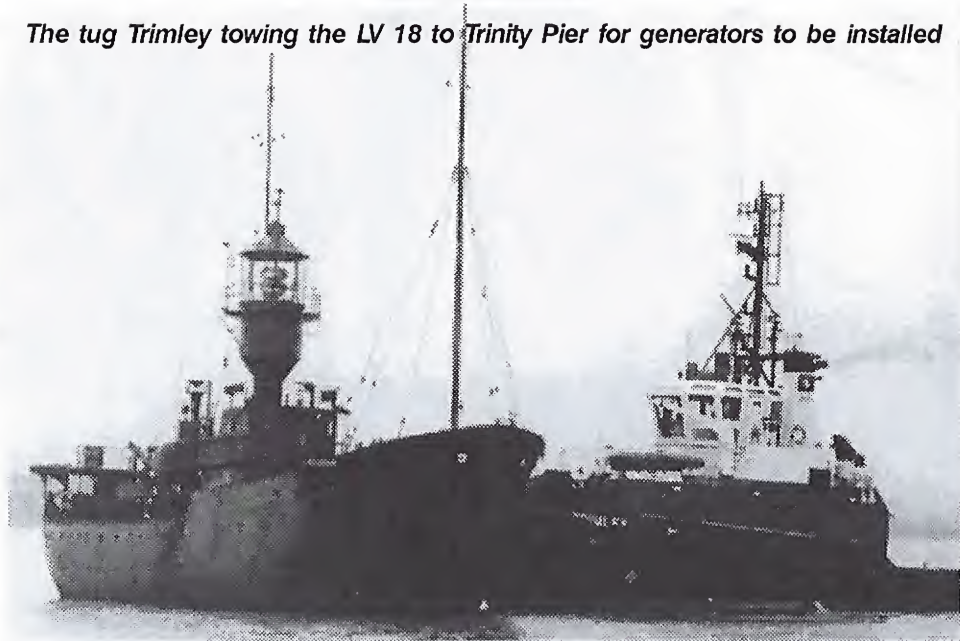
Task force – waiting for the tender

Being pulled off the old Railway Pier moving to the adjacent Trinity Pier



Mid July '99

The tug Trimley towing the LV 18 to Trinity Pier for generators to be installed



Mid July '99

Arriving at Trinity Pier seconds before the ferry's engine exploded



Alongside Trinity Pier

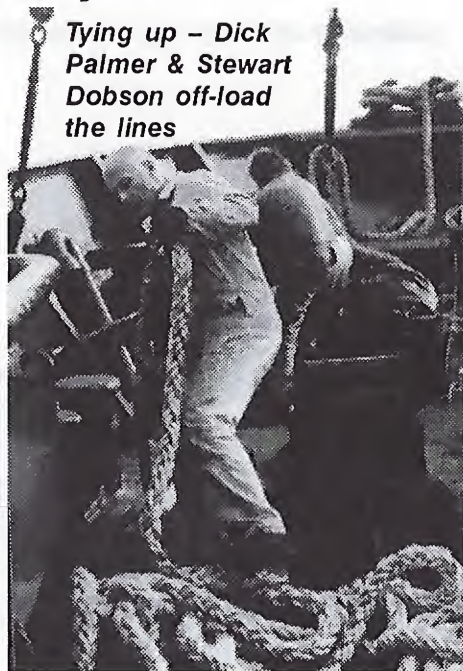


Under tow

Mid to Late July '99



Temporary berth at Trinity Pier



Tying up – Dick Palmer & Stewart Dobson off-load the lines



The radio mast is lifted into place



Base of the radio mast is welded onto the heli-deck

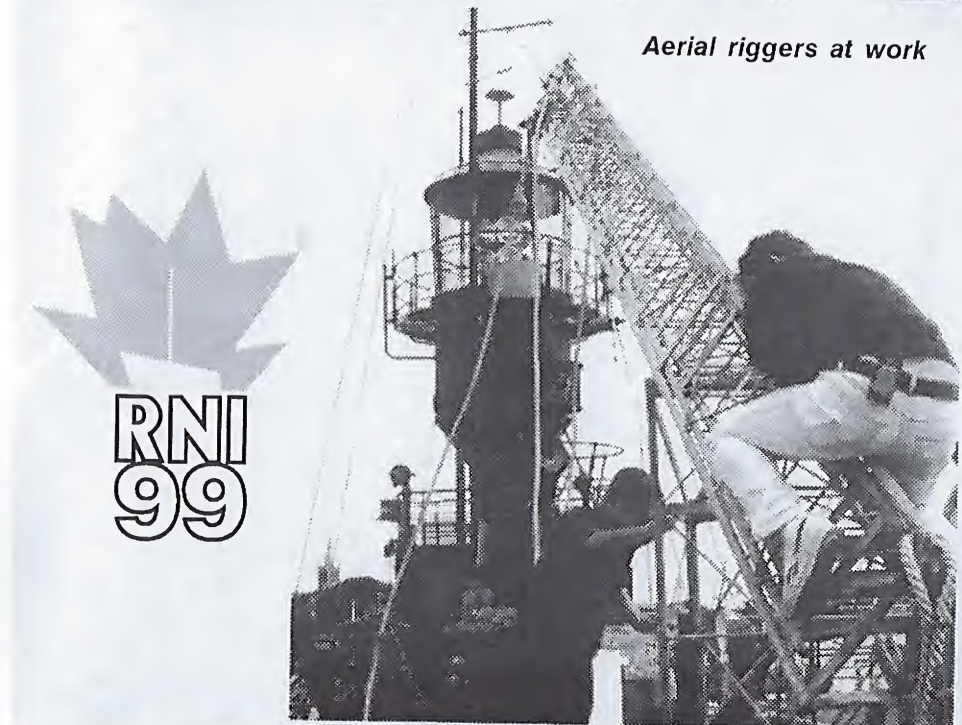
Late July '99



Trinity House welder at work on the radio mast



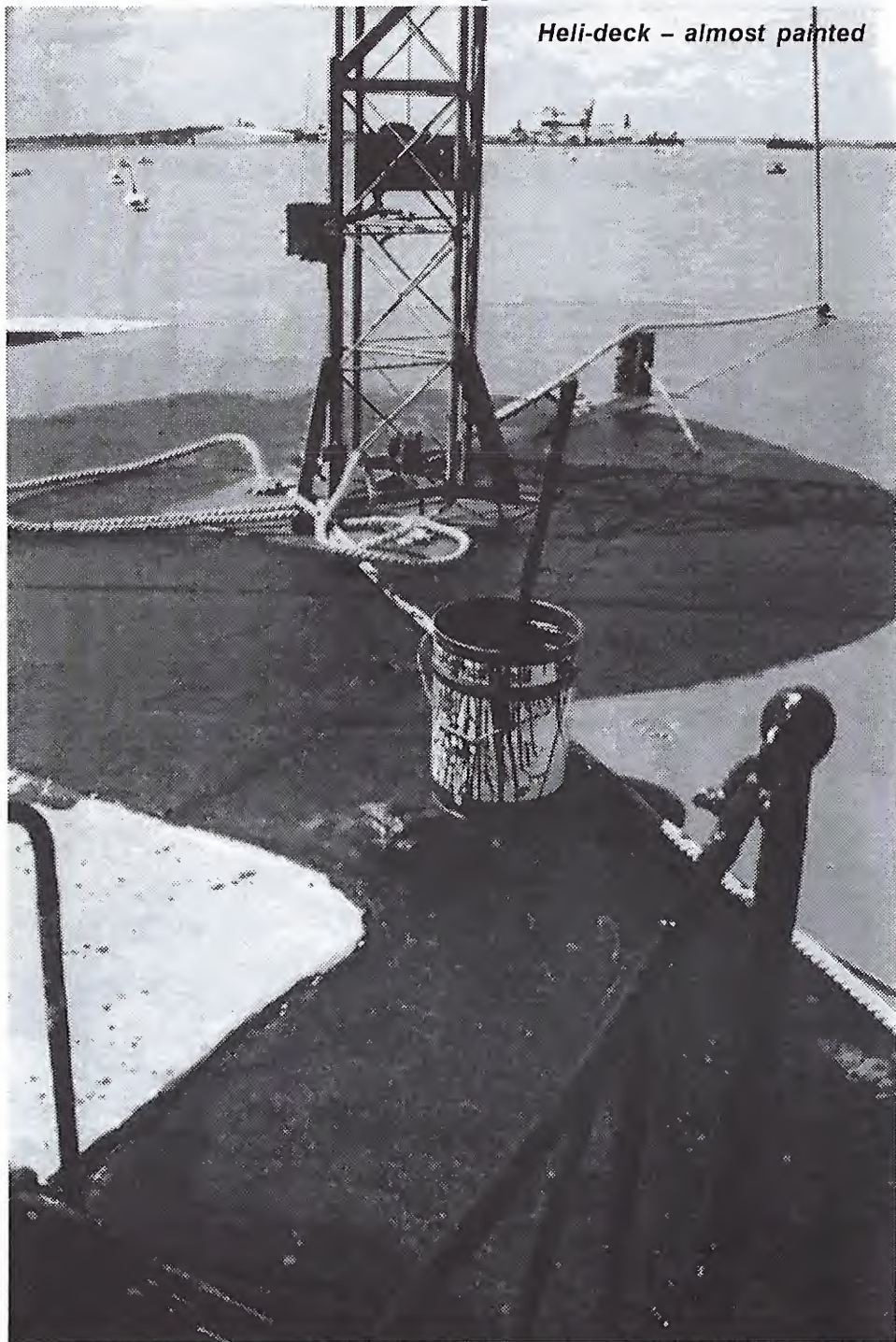
Raising the mast



Aerial riggers at work

Late July '99

Heli-deck – almost painted



Late July '99

The radio mast finally in place and fully extended

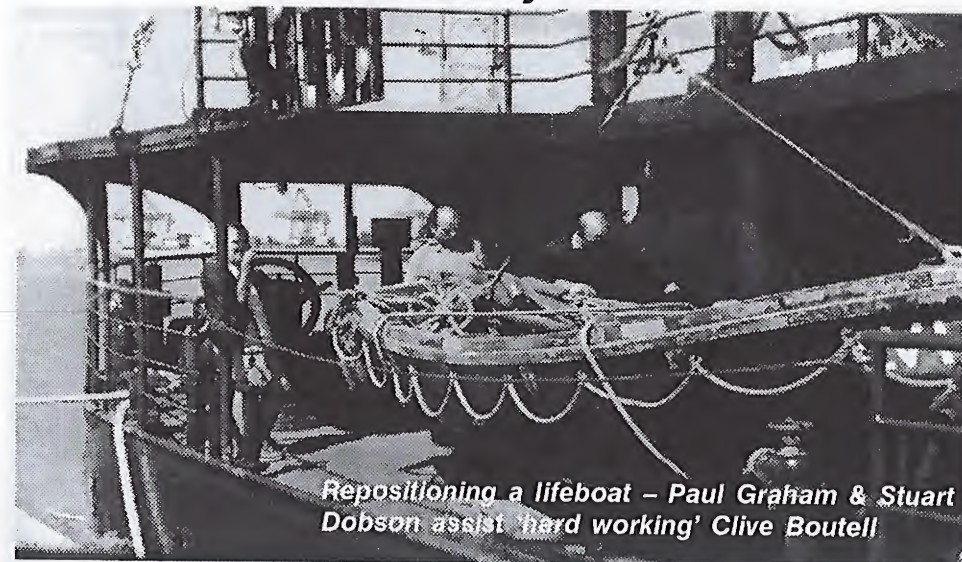


Late July '99



Deck clearance nearly finished

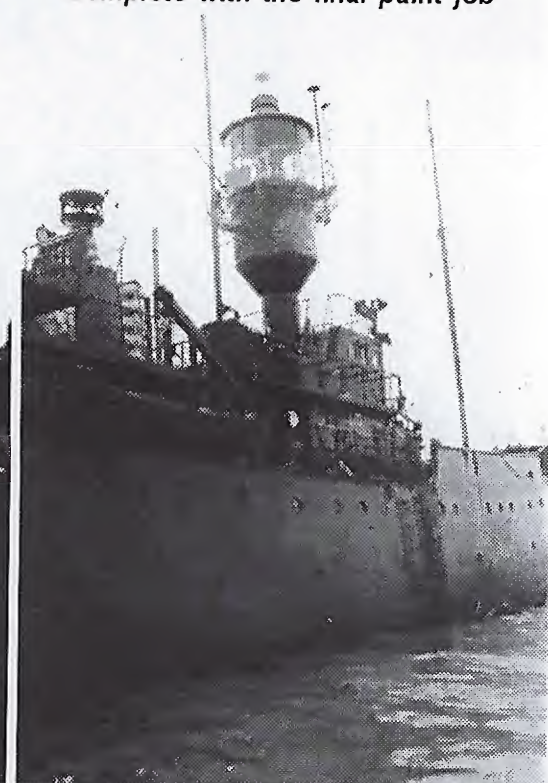
Late July '99



Repositioning a lifeboat – Paul Graham & Stuart Dobson assist 'hard working' Clive Boutell

It's hard work painting the hull with a hand roller

Complete with the final paint job



Late July – Early August '99

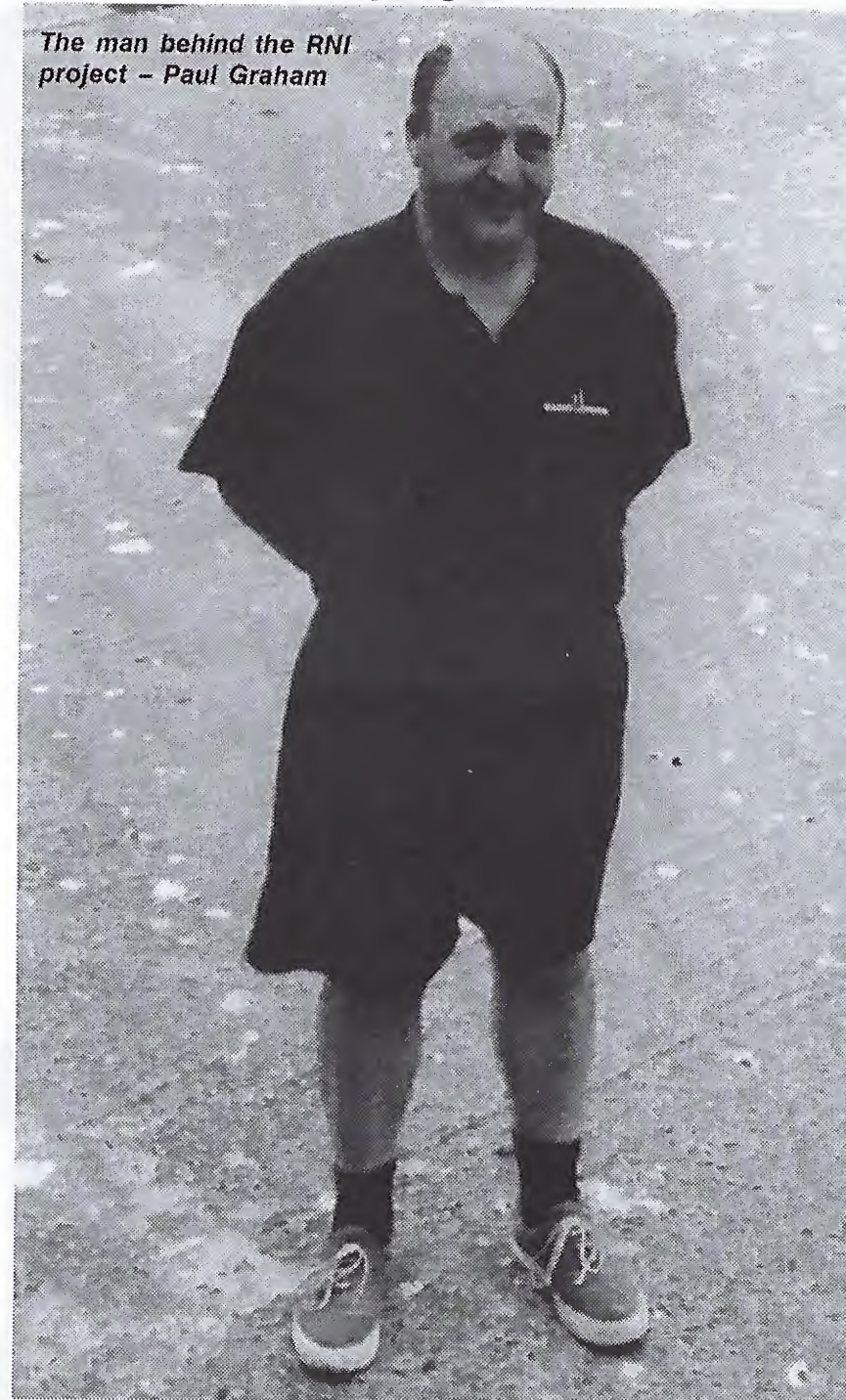
Tiptree logo in place and the RNI name boards complete



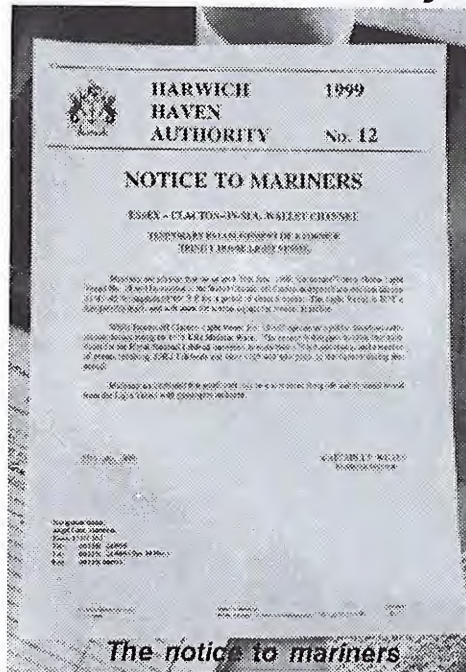
Nearly ready to go!

Early August '99

The man behind the RNI project – Paul Graham



Early August '99



The notice to mariners



The Mebo III, ready to go to sea



Paul Graham climbs aboard

Early August '99



Ray Anderson with the studio mixer from the Communicator/Laser 558

Early August '99

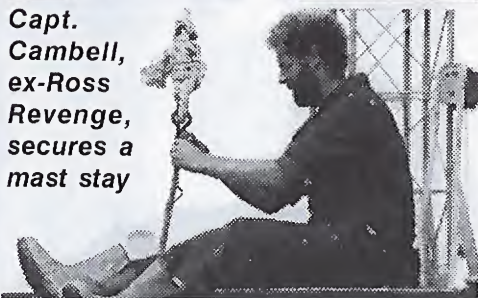
Completed heli-deck with RNI logo



Paul MacLaren in the mess room



Capt. Cambell, ex-Ross Revenge, secures a mast stay

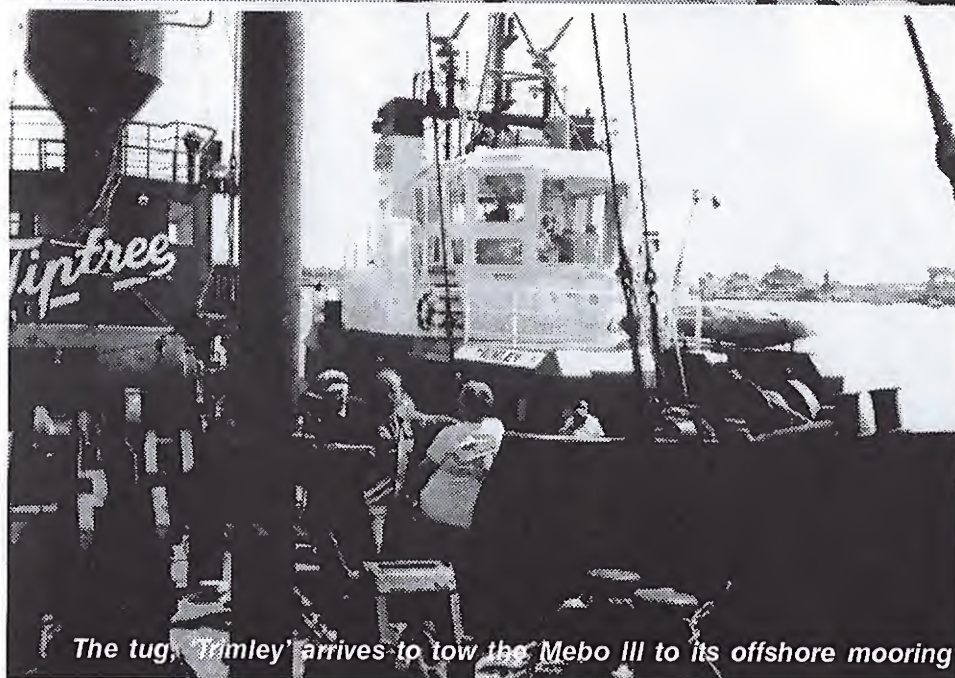


All set to go. (from left) Paul Graham, Ray Anderson, Victor Hartman, Paul MacLaren, Stuart Dobson, Captain Cambell and Tony O'Neill



Early August '99

Stuart Dobson takes out the trash



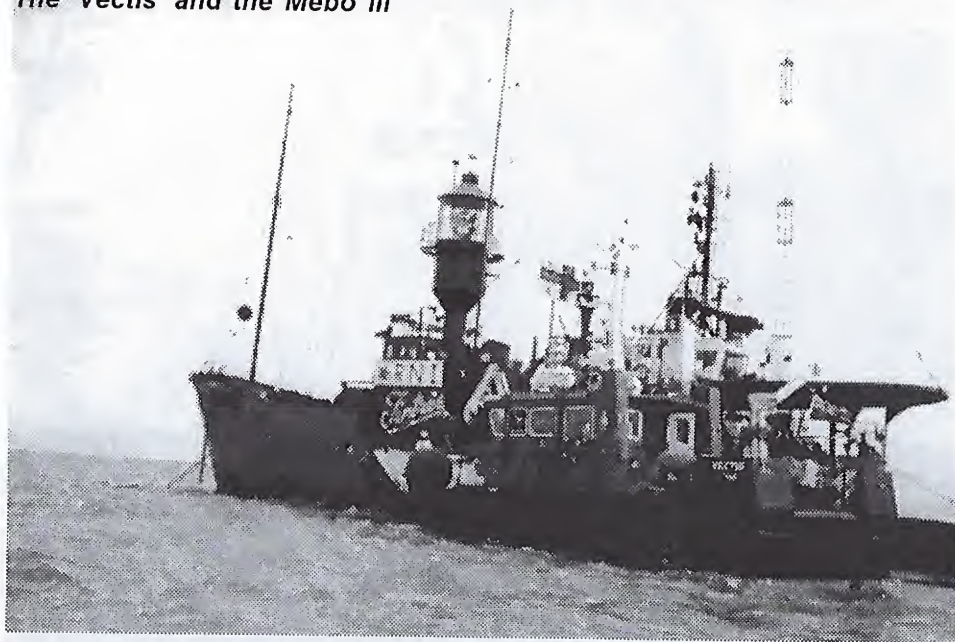
The tug, 'Trimley' arrives to tow the Mebo III to its offshore mooring

Early August '99

**Mebo III being moored off Clacton-on-Sea
by the Trinity House vessel, 'Vectis'**



The 'Vectis' and the Mebo III



August '99

Crew secure the mooring



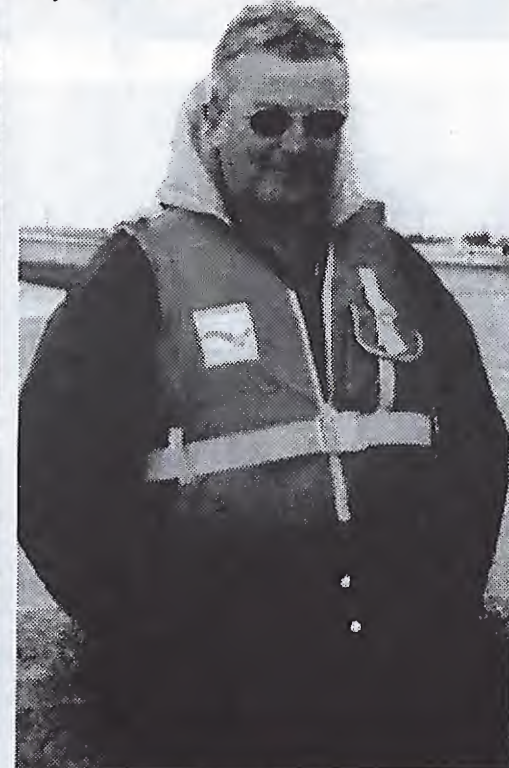
**Skipper, Mick Catchpole,
Stuart Dobson & Dick
Palmer**



Tony Currie on news duty



Ray Anderson awaits the tender



August '99



Tony Currie & Dave Rogers



Dave Rogers – on air

August '99



Paul Maclaren and the RNI transmitter



Norman Barrington, Dick Palmer and Alan West

August '99



The RNI studio built around the ex-Laser 558 Gateway Mixer



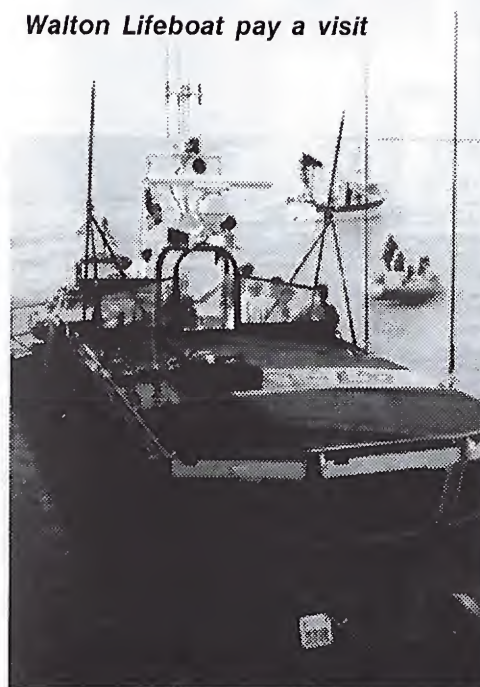
Kevin Turner

August '99

*Ex-Radio Caroline & Voice of Peace deejay,
Phil Mitchell*



Walton Lifeboat pay a visit

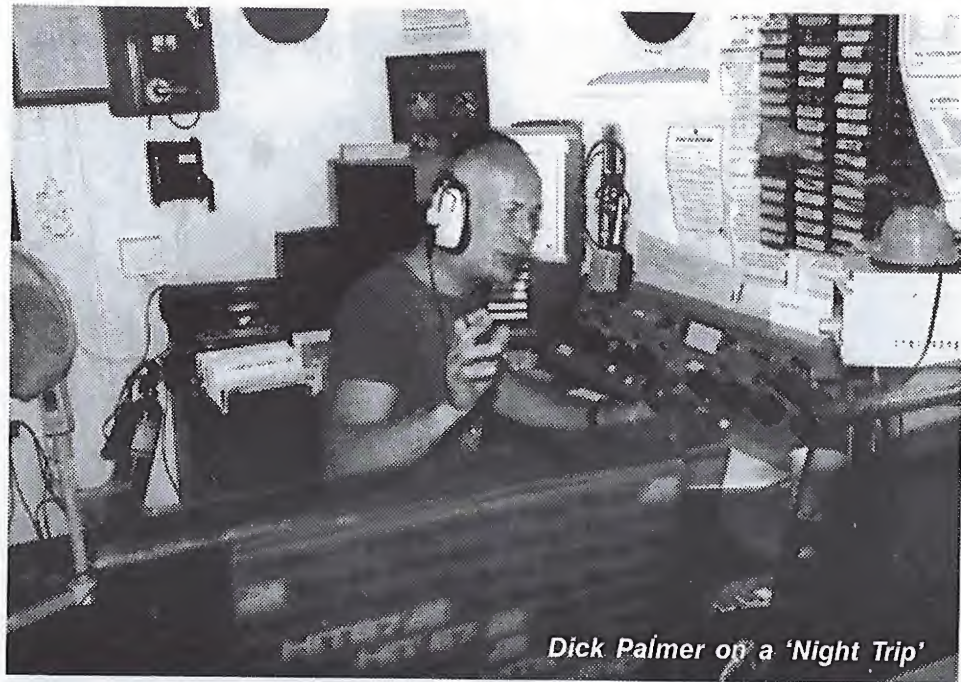


*Ray Anderson looking for
Clacton Flashers*



August '99

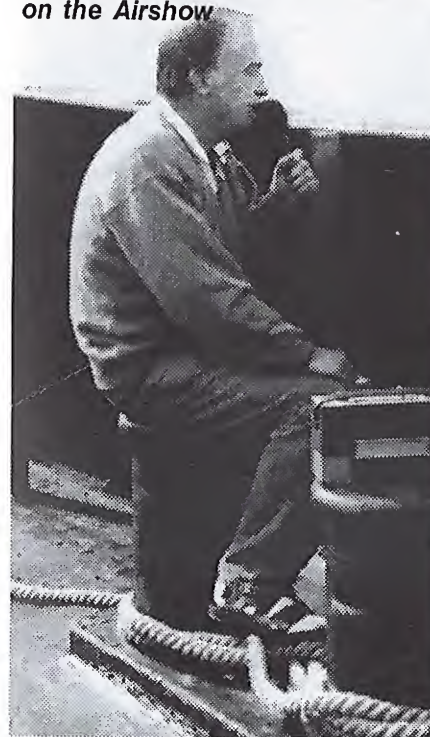
Alan West, two Dutch journalists & Ray Anderson



Dick Palmer on a 'Night Trip'

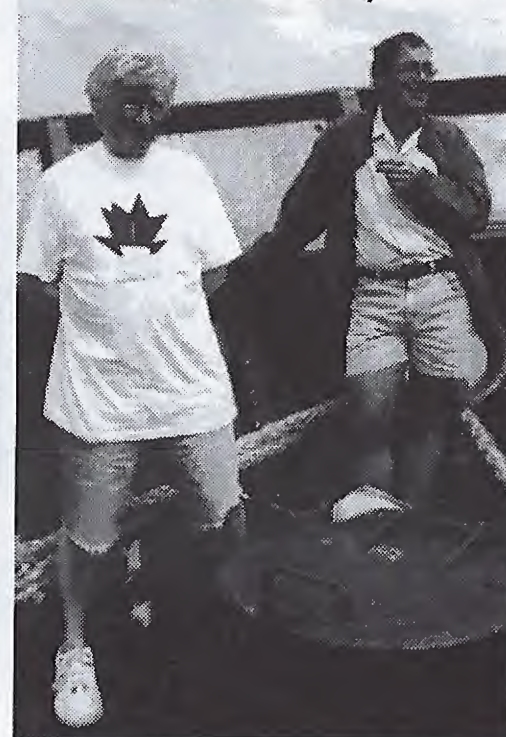
August '99

John Platt with live commentary on the Airshow

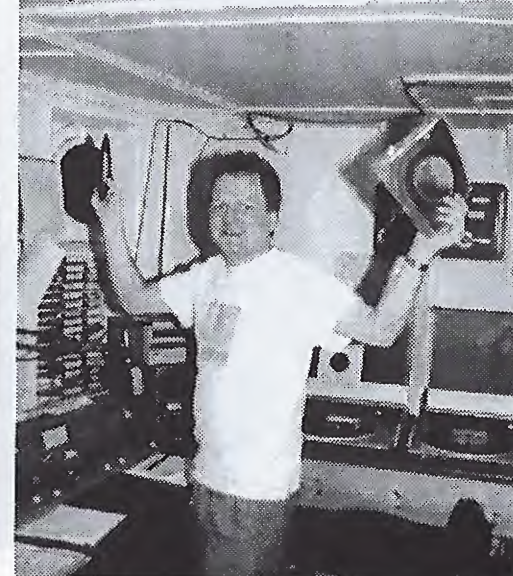


Former RNI deejay, A.J. Beirens is interviewed for Belgian Radio

Alan West with a Dutch journalist



Clive Boutell proves we only played vinyl



August '99



Phil Mitchell gets serious with his listeners



Paul Graham - on the air

August '99



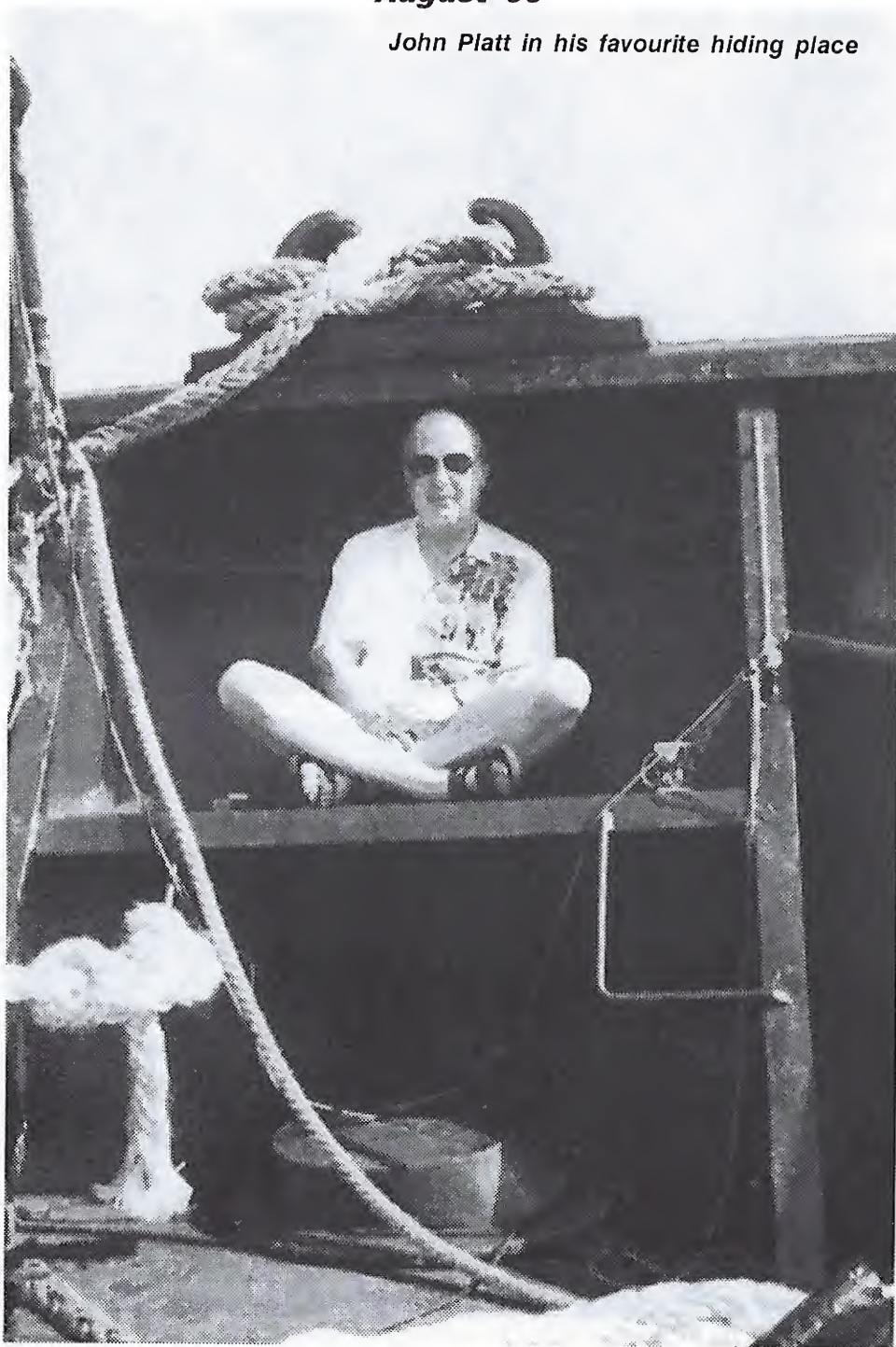
John Platt takes a turn on air at 4.40 am - poor man!



Clive Boutell selects the next disk

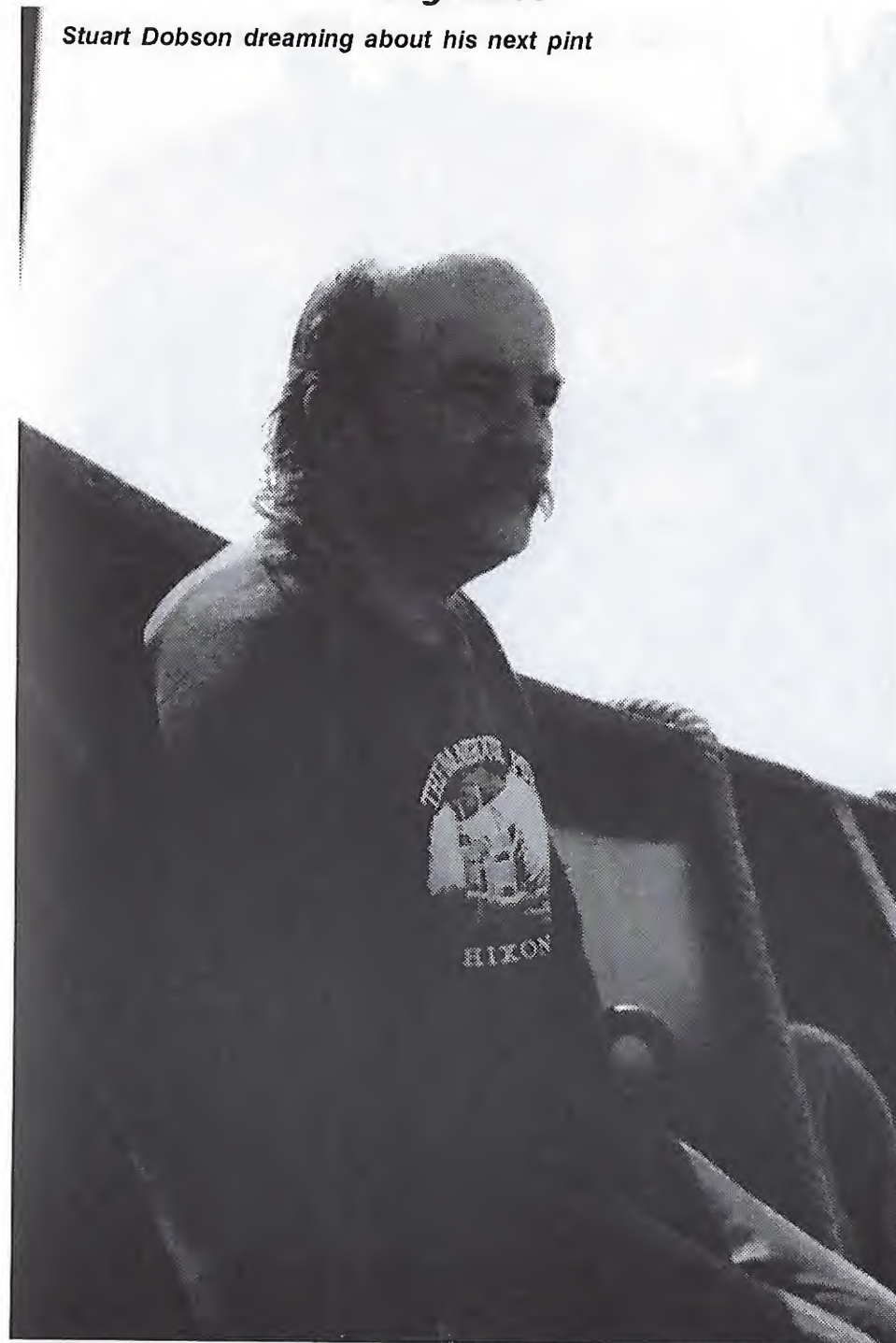
August '99

John Platt in his favourite hiding place



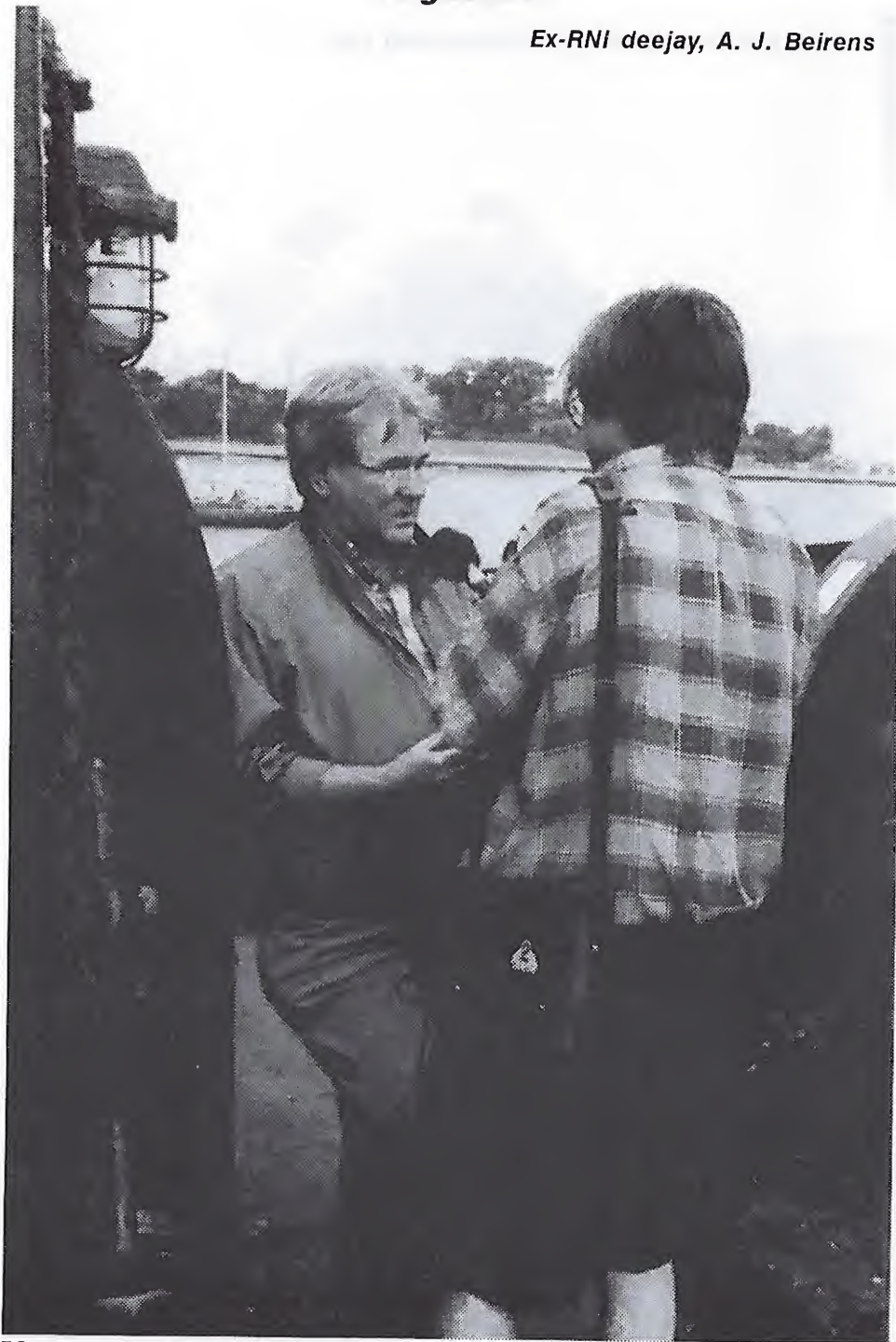
August '99

Stuart Dobson dreaming about his next pint



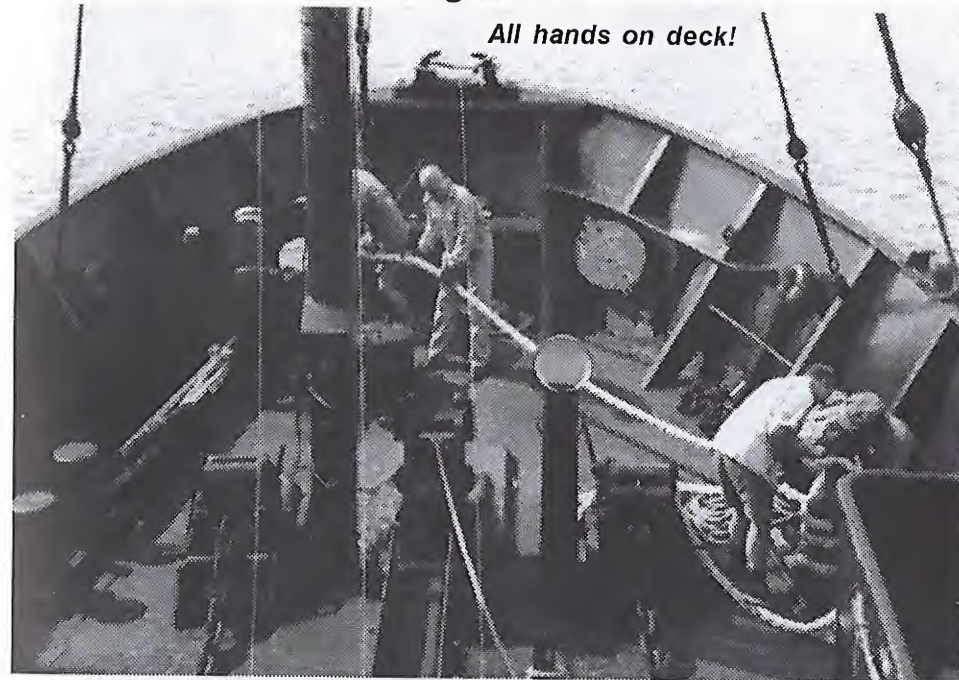
August '99

Ex-RNI deejay, A. J. Beirens



August '99

All hands on deck!



The 'Big Dick' – Palmer

August '99



Clive Boutell swings

Dick Palmer in the crew's washroom, but what is he up to?



Norman Barrington wishes he was on the tender



August '99



Thumbs up from former Radio Essex, BBMS and Caroline man, Dick Palmer



Dick and Stuart in the galley

August '99



Alan West climbs aboard



Paul Graham cues the next record



Mike Read's punishment for breaking format



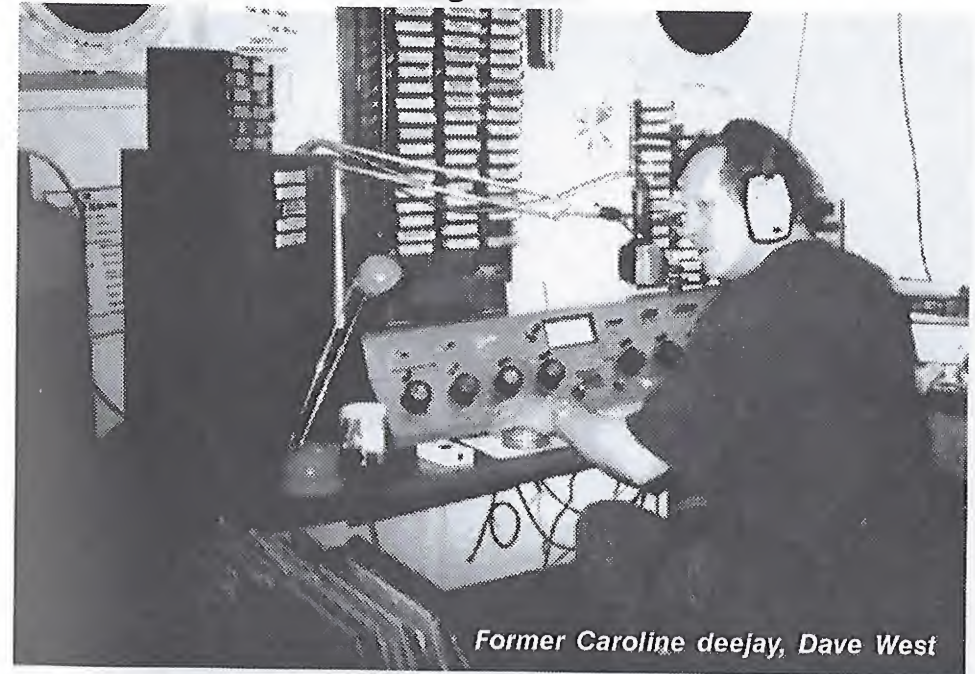
Phil Mitchell - on air

August '99



Chris Baird in the crew's mess

August '99

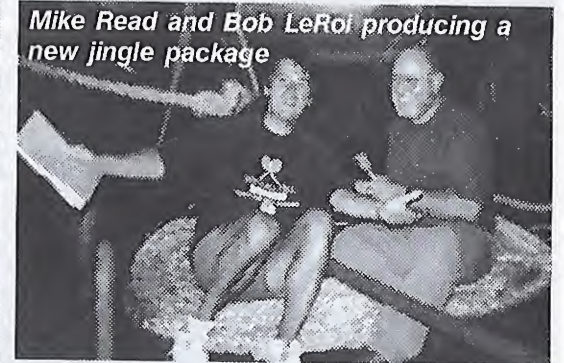


Former Caroline deejay, Dave West

Paul Maclaren on fly
swatting patrol



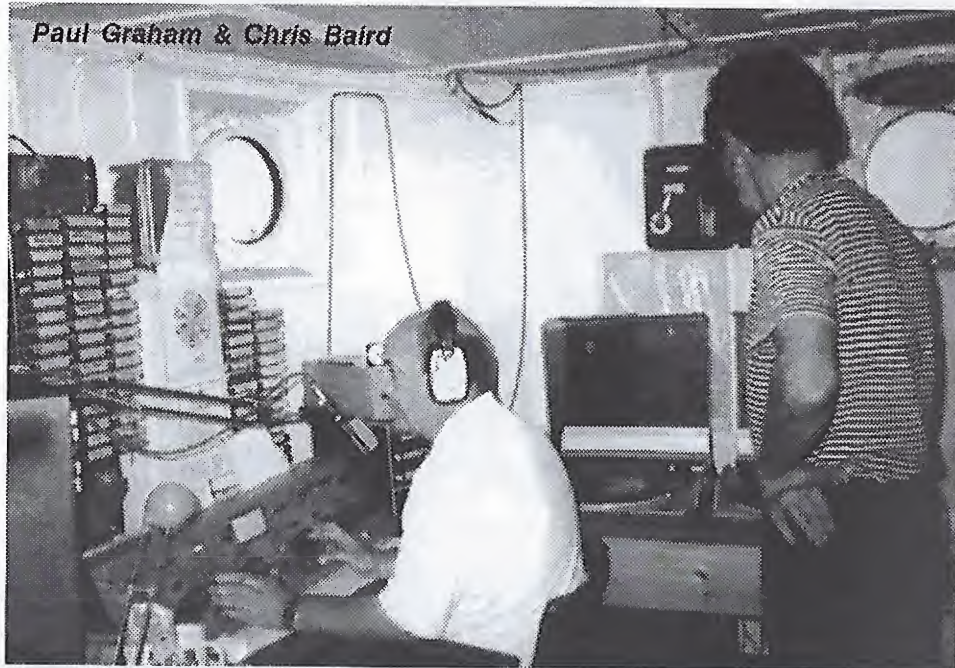
Mike Read and Bob LeRoi producing a
new jingle package



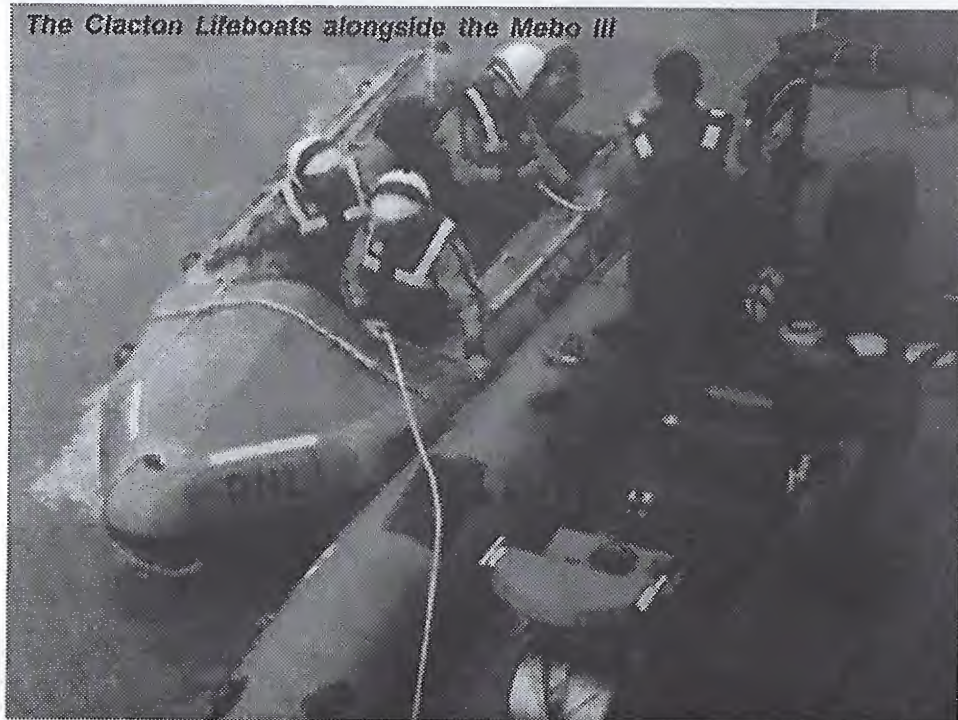
Dick chats to visitors in the mess

August '99

Paul Graham & Chris Baird

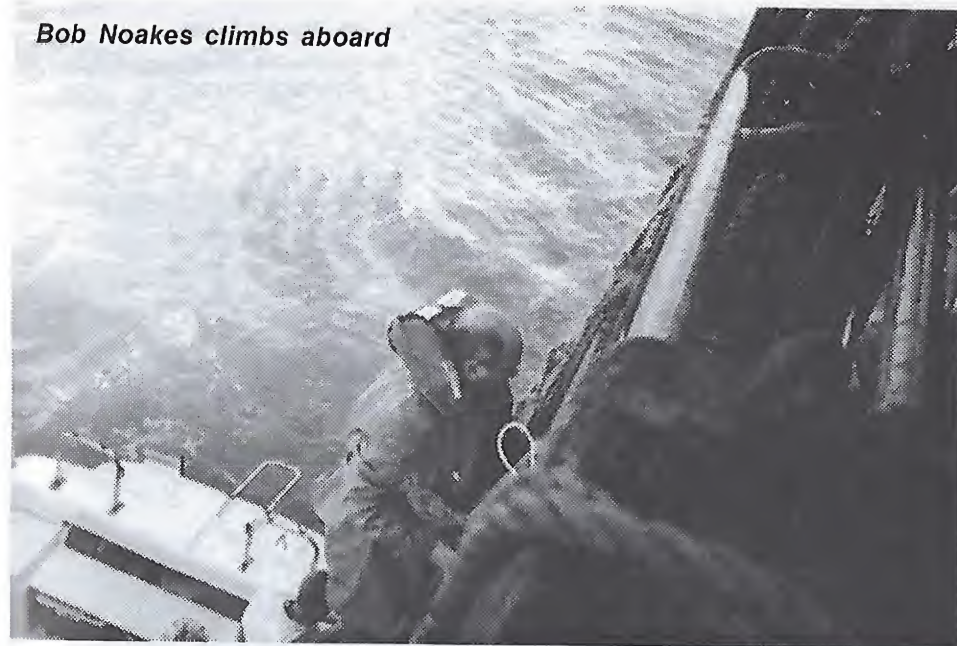


The Clacton Lifeboats alongside the Mebo III

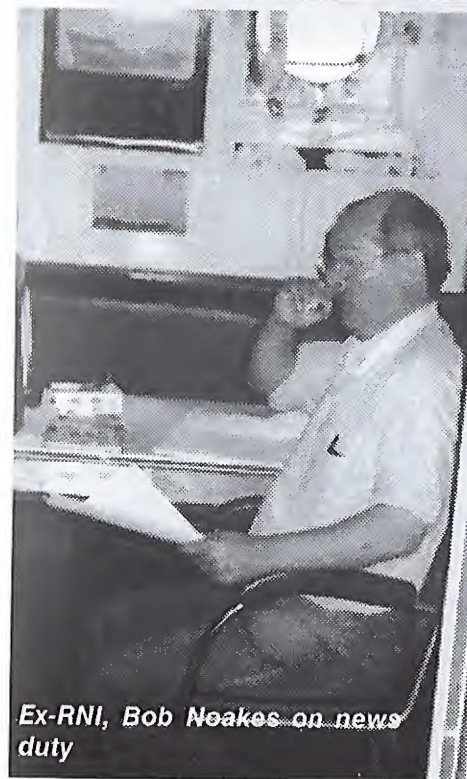


August '99

Bob Noakes climbs aboard



The lovely Julie (Dave West's girlfriend)



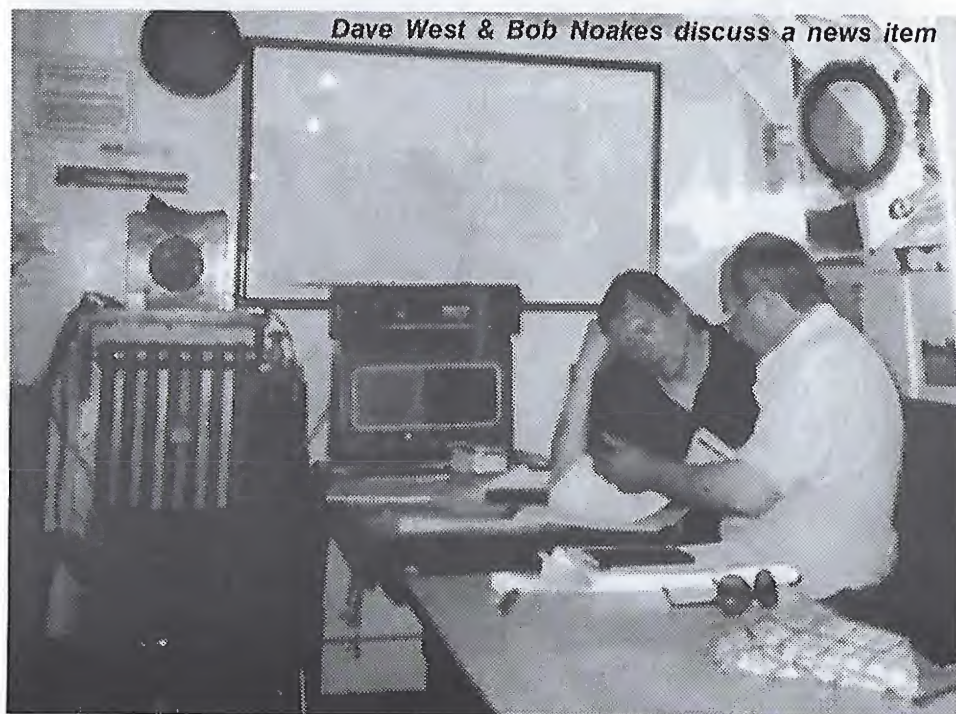
Ex-RNI, Bob Noakes on news duty



August '99

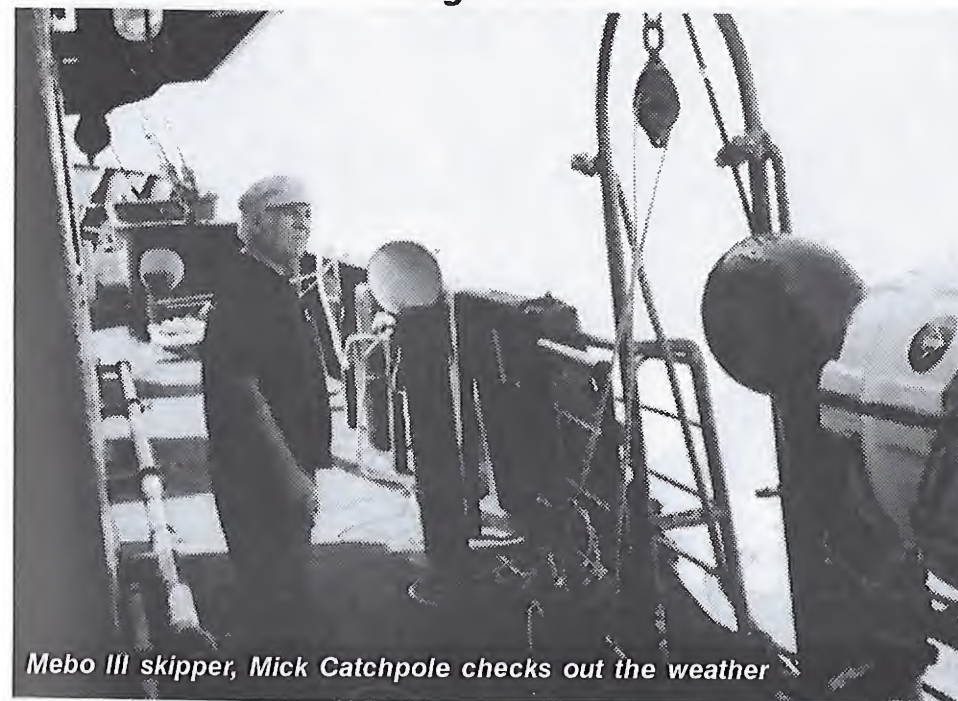


Dave West

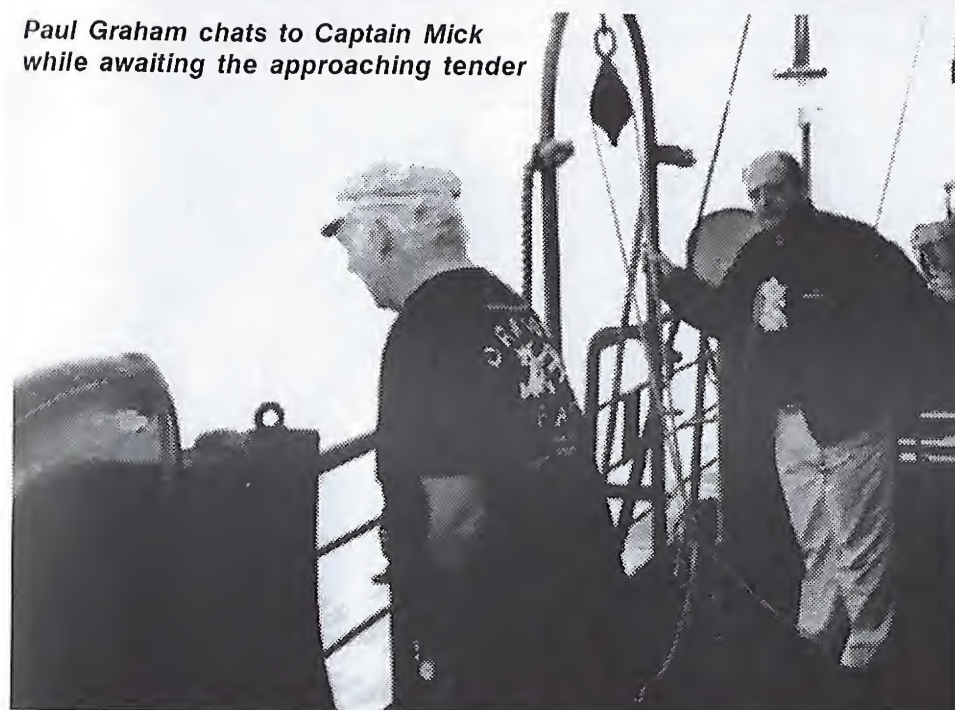


Dave West & Bob Noakes discuss a news item

August '99



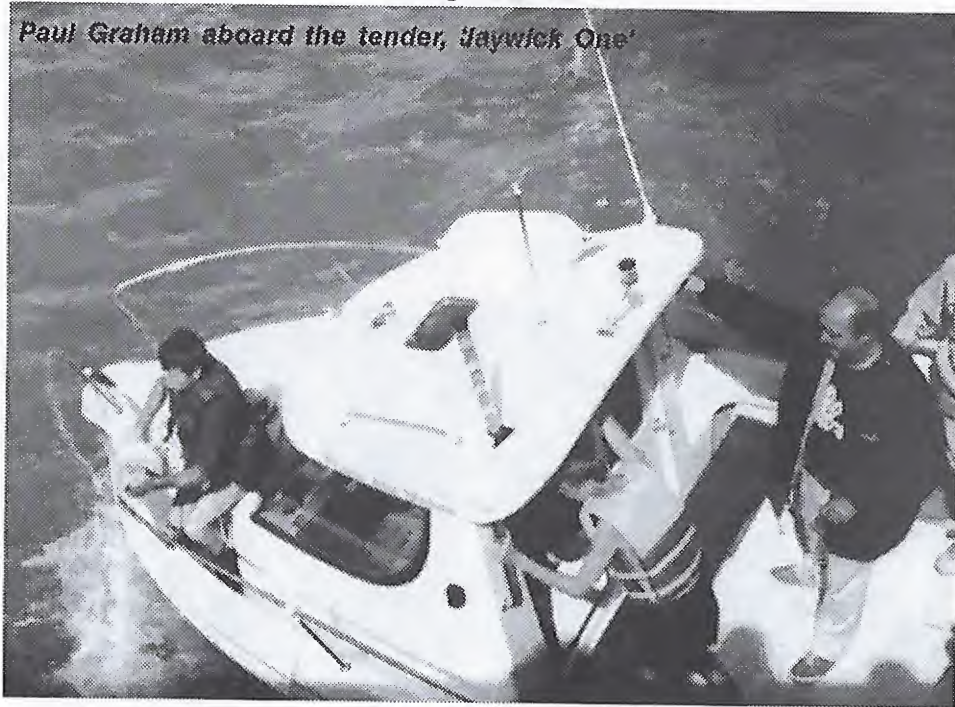
Mebo III skipper, Mick Catchpole checks out the weather



Paul Graham chats to Captain Mick while awaiting the approaching tender

August '99

Paul Graham aboard the tender, 'Jaywick One'



Dick & Graham during the 'final hour'



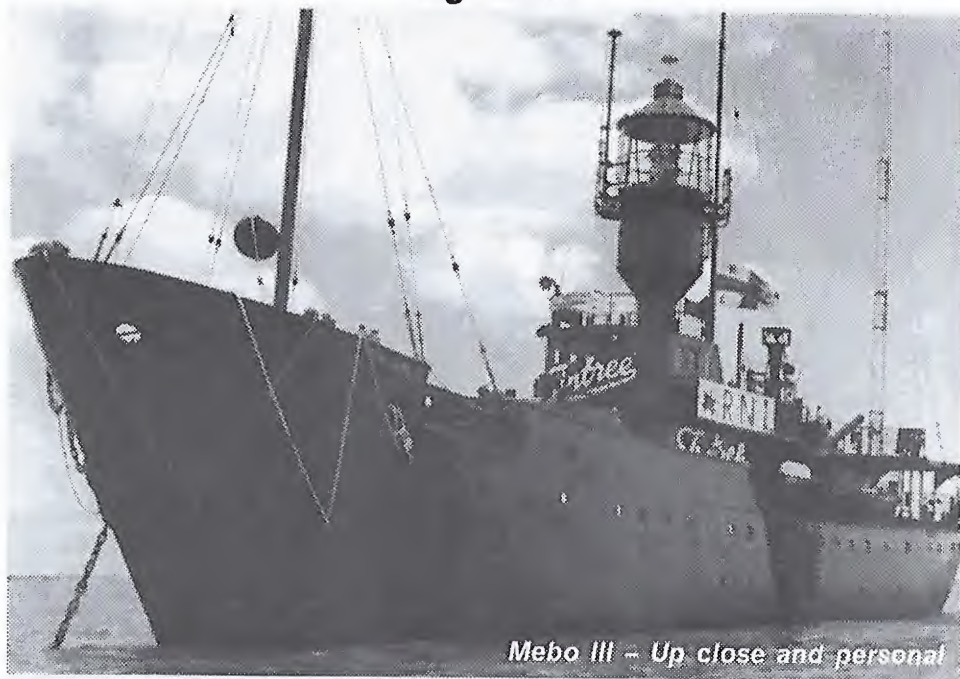
August '99



RNI deejays during the final hour

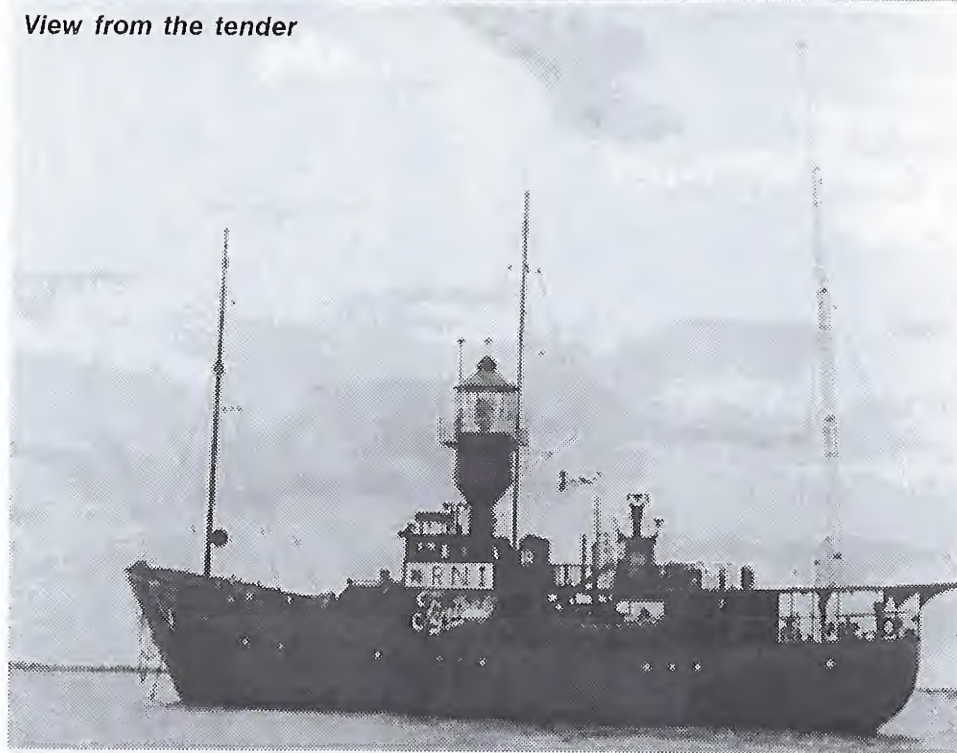


August '99



Mebo III - Up close and personal

View from the tender



August '99

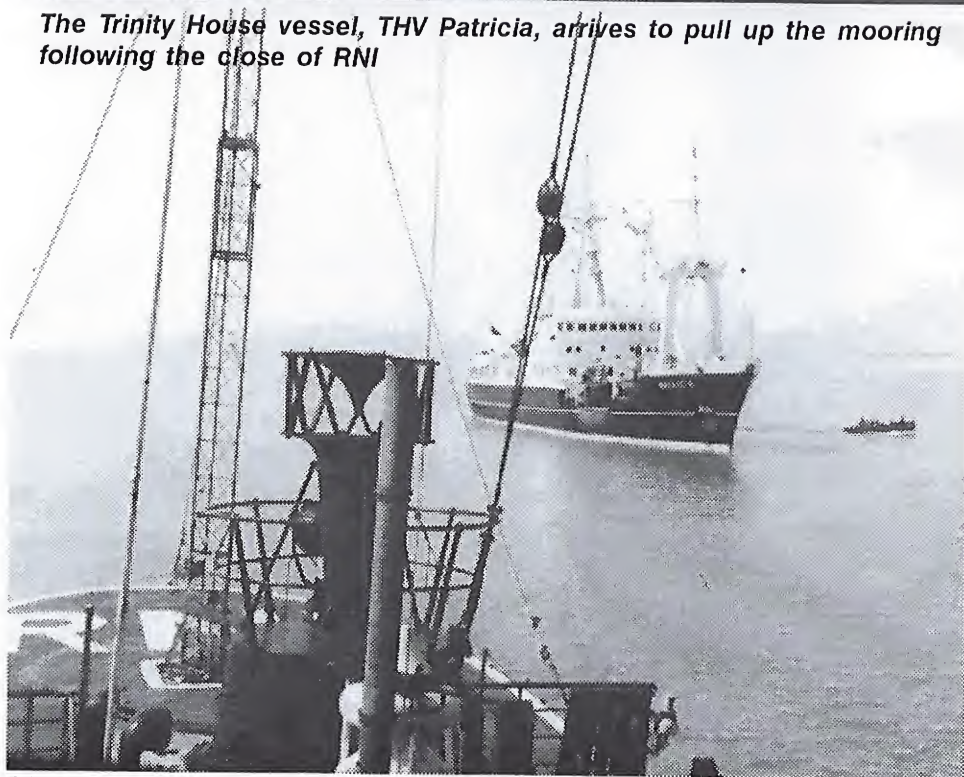


August '99

Dave Rogers interviews a rather wet Mary Payne



The Trinity House vessel, THV Patricia, arrives to pull up the mooring following the close of RNI



September '99

LV 18 under tow entering Harwich Harbour



The Tug, Trimley, bringing the LV 18 into Harwich

It's all over! The LV 18, back at the Old Railway Pier



THE NATIONAL VINTAGE WIRELESS AND TELEVISION MUSEUM, HIGH LIGHTHOUSE, HARWICH, ESSEX

The museum, previously housed at Dedham, Essex, traces the history of broadcasting from Marconi and Baird's early experiments to present day developments in satellite communication. The museum is set out as an informative and educational exhibition showing much of the museum's large collection of vintage wireless and television receivers and utilising the latest audio/visual interpretation to create a lively and unique atmosphere

Phase One of the museum at the High Lighthouse opened to the general public in 1995. On show is some of the original equipment used by these early pioneers, demonstrating the first wireless transmissions and mechanical scan television. The exhibition is set out chronologically in a series of 'room sets' on each floor of the Lighthouse, each with a selection of vintage receivers in a contemporary setting with the décor of each period. The reception area houses a vast selection of material and artifacts relating to the history of 'offshore pirate radio,' many of the items having been donated to the museum by enthusiasts.

THE LIGHT VESSEL

The long term aim of the Trust is, due to the size limitations of the High Lighthouse, to split the museum between two sites at Harwich, (Television and Wireless). A feasibility study in 1991 investigated the possibility of the purchase of a decommissioned light vessel from Trinity House to contain Phase 2 of the museum, which was to be moored at Harwich. The Museum was placed on the Trinity House Tender List for the purchase of a redundant vessel.

The report concluded that such a situation would be most favourable due to the space available on board, the continuity between the two sites. The tourist appeal of such a vessel being open to the public and the importance of such a vessel in the history of broadcasting. In 1899, at the invitation of Trinity House, Marconi set up a demonstration station on the East Goodwin Lightship and, using the South Foreland Lighthouse as a shore station, relayed the first ever ship to shore message. Later that year the SS R.F. Matthews collided with the lightship and following radioed distress signals, the first sea rescue through wireless took place.

In 1994 after viewing two vessels for sale at Harwich, discussions took place with Sea Containers Ltd., the owners of LV 18, regarding the possible lease of the ship to house phase two within a proposed marina development at Gas House Creek, Harwich.

THE LV18 / RNI PROJECT

In March 1999 the RNI project was discussed and from day one, I immediately expressed a keen interest to be involved. Much of the groundwork had been done by myself in 1997 with an attempted project to bring the MV Ross Revenge to Harwich for a Radio Caroline RSL. My continuing involvement with Caroline proved to be of benefit as many old faces began to turn up with offers of assistance. It soon became clear that the two projects could be of help to each other, as was to be the case.

We had a lot of fun, we got wet we got sworn at by tug men, people said we'd never do it – but we did, *didn't we!* I would do it all over again and I hope you'll be there next time.

Thanks to all the crew and those involved, there's just too many people to thank individually here, but here are a few unsung heroes whose support was really appreciated. All at Caroline, Trinity House, Chris Spraggons, Mick Catchpole, Colin Crawford & co, Glen & co from Chelmsford, Paul Bonnet, Tony Haggis, Dick Palmer and his late night shows (I have the tapes!), and the people of Harwich, especially Sally who put up with all of it!

The rest is now just broadcasting history and will be researched and chronicled in time to come, by those who have an interest in such things – god bless 'em – who knows what the future may bring? One thing is for sure, the world would be a far duller place without you good people who have supported our museum, the RNI project, Radio Caroline, and helped us keep these dreams alive. Thank you and keep listening.

INFORMATION ON THE LV 18

Displacement – 581 tons gross

Length – 110 feet

Built – Phillips & Sons, Dartmouth, 1957

Last position as 'LV Dowsing' approximately 35 miles N.E. of Cromer

Came off station – 1988